

a.) Amendments to the Claims

1. (Currently Amended) A method of enhancing the salty taste of a food or beverage containing salt, which comprises adding [an] a purified and isolated acidic peptide to the food or beverage, said acidic peptide having a molecular weight from 400 to 30,000, wherein the acidic peptide comprises at least 20% acidic amino acids and the acidic peptide contains more acidic amino acids than basic amino acids.

2. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the acidic peptide is an acidic peptide which is obtainable by subjecting a protein to hydrolysis.

3. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the acidic peptide is an acidic peptide which is obtainable by subjecting a protein to hydrolysis and deamidation.

4. (Currently Amended) The method according to any of claims 1 to 3 or 43 to 45, which further comprises adding a basic substance to the food or beverage.

5. (Currently Amended) The method according to ~~claim 4~~ claim 52, wherein the basic substance is a basic amino acid.

6. (Original) The method according to claim 5, wherein the basic amino acid is arginine.

7. (Currently Amended) The method according to any of claims 1 to 3 or 43 to 45, which further comprises adding succinic acid to the food or beverage.

8. (Currently Amended) A salty taste enhancer comprising an admixture of a purified and isolated acidic peptide as an active ingredient and a comestibly acceptable carrier, said acidic peptide having a molecular weight from 400 to 30,000, wherein the acidic peptide comprises at least 20% acidic amino acids and the acidic peptide contains more acidic amino acids than basic amino acids.

9. (Original) The salty taste enhancer according to claim 8, wherein the acidic peptide is an acidic peptide which is obtainable by subjecting a protein to hydrolysis.

10. (Original) The salty taste enhancer according to claim 8, wherein the acidic peptide is an acidic peptide which is obtainable by subjecting a protein to hydrolysis and deamidation.

11. (Currently Amended) The salty taste enhancer according to any of claims 8 to 10 or 46 to 48, further comprising a basic substance.

12. (Currently Amended) The salty taste enhancer according to ~~claim 11~~ claim 55, wherein the basic substance is a basic amino acid.

13. (Original) The salty taste enhancer according to claim 12, wherein the basic amino acid is arginine.

14. (Currently Amended) The salty taste enhancer according to any of claims 8 to 10 or 46 to 48, further comprising succinic acid.

15. (Currently Amended) A salty taste seasoning agent comprising an admixture of a purified and isolated acidic peptide and a salt, said acidic peptide having a molecular weight from 400 to 30,000, wherein the acidic peptide comprises at least 20% acidic amino acids and the acidic peptide contains more acidic amino acids than basic amino acids.

16. (Original) The salty taste seasoning agent according to claim 15, wherein the acidic peptide is an acidic peptide which is obtainable by subjecting a protein to hydrolysis.

17. (Original) The salty taste seasoning agent according to claim 15, wherein the acidic peptide is an acidic peptide which is obtainable by subjecting a protein to hydrolysis and deamidation.

18. (Currently Amended) The salty taste seasoning agent according to any of claims 15 to 17 or 49 to 51, further comprising a basic substance.

19. (Currently Amended) The salty taste seasoning agent according to ~~claim 18~~ claim 58, wherein the basic substance is a basic amino acid.

20. (Original) The salty taste seasoning agent according to claim 19, wherein the basic amino acid is arginine.

21. (Currently Amended) The salty taste seasoning agent according to any of claims 15 to 17 or 49 to 51, further comprising succinic acid.

22. (Currently Amended) A food or beverage comprising the salty taste enhancer according to any of claims 8 to 10 or 46 to 48.

23. (Currently Amended) A food or beverage comprising salt and the salty taste enhancer according to any of claims 8 to 10 or 46 to 48.

24. (Previously Presented) A food or beverage comprising the salty taste seasoning agent according to any of claims 15 to 17 or 49 to 51.

Claims 25-42 (Cancelled).

43. (New) The method according to claim 1, wherein the acidic peptide comprises at least 30% acidic amino acids.

44. (New) The method according to claim 43, wherein the acidic peptide has a molecular weight from 700 to 27,000.

45. (New) The method according to claim 44, wherein the acidic peptide is from 6 to 230 amino-acids.

46. (New) The salty taste enhancer according to claim 8, wherein the acidic peptide comprises at least 30% acidic amino acids.

47. (New) The salty taste enhancer according to claim 46, wherein the acidic peptide has a molecular weight from 700 to 27,000.

48. (New) The salty taste enhancer according to claim 47, wherein the acidic peptide is from 6 to 230 amino acids.

49. (New) The salty taste seasoning agent according to claim 15, wherein the acidic peptide comprises at least 30% acidic amino acids.

50. (New) The salty taste seasoning agent according to claim 49, wherein the acidic peptide has a molecular weight from 700 to 27,000.

51. (New) The salty taste seasoning agent according to claim 50, wherein the acidic peptide is from 6 to 230 amino acids.

52. (New) The method according to claim 4, wherein the concentration of the basic substance is 3 to 50 mmol/kg.

53. (New) The method according to claim 6, wherein the concentration of arginine is 0.04 to 0.9 %.

54. (New) The method according to claim 7, wherein the concentration of succinic acid is 0.001 to 0.1 %.

55. (New) The salty taste enhancer according to claim 11, wherein the concentration of the basic substance is 3 to 50 mmol/kg.

56. (New) The salty taste enhancer according to claim 13, wherein the concentration of arginine is 0.04 to 0.9 %.

57. (New) The salty taste enhancer according to claim 14, wherein the concentration of succinic acid is 0.001 to 0.1 %.

58. (New) The salty taste seasoning agent according to claim 18, wherein the concentration of the basic substance is 3 to 50 mmol/kg.

59. (New) The salty taste seasoning agent according to claim 20, wherein the concentration of arginine is 0.04 to 0.9%.

60. (New) The salty taste seasoning agent according to claim 21, wherein the concentration of succinic acid is 0.001 to 0.1 %.